

NEWS RELEASE



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IKE SKELTON REPORTS (for the week of March 17-21)

Legislation enacted in the 1970's to cure alleged abuses by U. S. intelligence agencies is seriously hindering our ability to collect information vital to our national defense. The time has come for Congress to restore balance in this area by tightening the control over sensitive intelligence information and removing unwarranted restraints on our intelligence gathering ability. The following are some of the major areas where changes must be made:

- (1) The so-called "Hughes-Ryan Amendment" -- It requires that the President inform a full eight committees of Congress of any decision to order the Central Intelligence Agency to engage in covert activity overseas. This requirement is cumbersome, time consuming, and brings too many people in on extremely fragile secrets.
- (2) The Freedom of Information Act -- Through the use of this statute, foreign agents have access to information regarding our government's intelligence activities. In addition, it is extremely difficult for us to prosecute and convict those who disclose sensitive, classified information, be it through espionage or "leaks", because the law requires that this, and other, intelligence information be disclosed in open court.
- (3) Revealing the Identity of Undercover Agents -- In recent years, the unauthorized disclosure of information identifying individuals engaged in or assisting in foreign intelligence or counterintelligence activities has undermined our nation's vital intelligence efforts. Moreover, the lives and safety of our government's intelligence officers and their families, as well as the lives and safety of those who cooperate with the U.S. in fulfilling its intelligence mission, have been placed in jeopardy. Current law is insufficient to cover the type of conduct that must be proscribed.
- (4) Survivor's Death Gratuity -- Employees of the CIA often serve in extremely hazardous circumstances. Yet, unlike State Department employees, their surviving dependents are not entitled to one year's salary should the CIA employee be killed in the line of duty. This oversight has caused many of our intelligence agents to believe that their efforts lack the support of Congress and the American people.

Legislation is pending in Congress which would eliminate these problems. I am a cosponsor of measures to:

- (1) Provide that the CIA report covert activities only to the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, instead of to the eight Congressional Committees which receive that information now.
- (2) Change the law so that foreign agents would no longer have access to information regarding our government's intelligence activities, and so that sensitive national security information would no longer have to be publicly disclosed in order to bring a foreign spy to justice.

(MORE)

- (3) Make it a federal crime, with stiff penalties, to reveal the identity of our foreign intelligence agents.
- (4) Authorize the payment of one year's salary to the surviving dependents of a CIA employee killed overseas as a result of hostile or terrorist activity or in connection with an intelligence activity having a substantial element of risk.

Recent events around the world have emphasized our lack of ability to conduct aggressive, effective intelligence operations. In fact, our intelligence agencies have nearly been put out of business in recent years. This must change. If our nation is to remain strong and free, we must enhance our intelligence capabilities by passing this essential legislation.